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Measure

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JaLeen Deardurff

Bob Dusek

Kelly Fink

Bradley Gellert

Angie Gibbs

John Groppe

Heather Moser

Mike Nichols

Matthew Owens

James Sedam

Tepnesh Tennvic Segil

Gayle Smith

Randy Wagers

Bill White

Jeremy White



Measure

Saint Joseph College
Rensselaer, Indiana
Volume LX



Measure

1997

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poems by

Bradley Gellert

Disco Queen

Bradley Gellert

Alone amidst a mass of writhing bodies
We dance fearlessly as one.
Your face forever in my mind,
radiating more beauty than the sun.

Tonight we join as friends,
but our love, we never deny.
You twist, I spin, we touch;
your soft skin sending me high.

70's music blaring,
noises from people in the background
I don't even notice, not even caring,
losing sense of all sight and sound.

Only your delicate image enthralls me,
our minds linked together
Your heart beats in my chest tonight,
an ecstasy to last forever.

The world holds no substance
back together as we used to,
I see you dancing through your eyes;
tonight again I am you.

Our love is founded on friendship
growing since you were first seen
not just by my eyes but with my soul
I love you forever, my Disco Queen.

Late One Night

Bradley Gellert

With beaded sweat and cardboard knees
he springs out of bed.

Timid eyes and twitching thighs
reveal thoughts scattered 'round his head.

He's searching, searching, searching
until at last his clammy palms
grasp the cool, smooth surface.

Holding his breath, he awaits a sign.
Is there anyone there? Anyone divine?
He exhales.
Silence.
The Universe has stopped to watch.

His stubborn body unwillingly
gives way to his mind's command.
To his head he raises freedom
in his hand.

The tension is palpable, unbearable!
And the tension builds.

His heart has always been an open sore.
And the tension builds.

His metallic feet, rooted firmly to the floor.
And the tension BUILDS.

Mummified legs don't know if they're standing as before.
And the TENSION BUILDS!

His rigid body, FORBIDDEN to flee out the door.
AND THE TENSION BUILDS UNTIL...

Exhilaration.
He wears a smile as he lies limp on the floor.
He's found his peace, which he didn't have before.

Jim

Bradley Gellert

"One lump or two?"
asked Jim, the man with the sugar cube.

"This magic cube will allow you to explore your mind."

He went on,
"The cloud within your eyes will dissipate and reveal you
have been blind!"

His tight, sullen skin which
stretched over his bones left
little in between.

"This sugar cube will invite you to explore things that have
never before been seen."

"Just open up and say, 'AAAHHH!'"

Later my head spun 'round
while my stomach felt blah.

I saw cats that didn't meow,
snakes that didn't hiss,
things I can't explain
that I didn't know exist.

Looking up at the stars
revealed to me
a gigantic grid
which was plain to see.

This map of skies in worlds of wonder
revealed to me our biggest blunder.

Perhaps we are not here for a "reason."
So swallow your pride and open your eyes
to the insignificance of you and I.

Studying in the Basement of Saint Joseph's College Library in Rensselaer, Indiana at 1:00 in the Afternoon

Gayle Smith

Here in this dim, quiet underworld the somber, musty volumes respect me and are glad for my presence. They don't mind if I cry or drift off to sleep. Ghosts of authors, former students and priests glide silently through the aisles and sometimes look over my shoulder.

Here I am finally warmed. The clanking pipes radiate their precious comfort. The funny smell of old binding glue is like a soothing unguent.

Down in these depths I dream the most sublime day-dreams. Sometimes I just read the graffiti scratched in secret on the desk and pipes—Jillian loves Michael forever.

When I leave this place, and ascend to the noisy, bright world above, I take with me in my soul a portion of its still, warm hush. Everything will be O.K. I can do this. I can do this.

My Lovely Lady

James Sedam

Oh, be a lonely night, I have
Time to spare and write
For I dine and lie alone
Without a bit of sleep this night

I woke at dawn this morn
Bathed and breakfasted quick
And in nature walked a path
Which led to a swelling creek

There I sat upon a stone
Skipping pebbles of lime
Cross the cool clear current
Which washed away our time

Was such an innocent day
Nature in full stride
But fitful ground then gave to us
I then gave you to the tide

I sat among the maple and oak
And spoke into the breeze
Tears were on my conscience
Which brought me to my knees

I gazed into a pool
Where the water had declined
The reflection crystal clear
Was that of yours and mine

Time has passed, three score today
But not a moment's come to part
When I've not sat beside this creek
Which stole my only heart



poems by

Matthew Owens

I Want

Matthew Owens

I want someone to keep the pain inside,
One to hold on to when all seems lost,
When anguish and despair are my best friends:
The unwanted kinds who grip and rend
At my apparent self-control and cognizance.

I want a sliver of an understanding of others;
One which is lacking in my life now.
For the mystery to me is thick and unbearable;
The whys, hows, and what-fors overwhelm me
Into a state of disillusioned hopelessness.

I want this sorrow to dissipate forever,
To evaporate with the rising sun like dew.
If only my dreary outlook would brighten
With the arrival of a golden beam of humanism
Which penetrates all the way to my dark core.

Blue-collar

Matthew Owens

I am part of the backbone of this society.
I come in the cover of early morning,
Rumbling up to your sidewalk once a week.

I keep Upper-class Suburbia sanitized,
Distinguishing it from the Inner-city;
Keeping you separated from *those* people.

Unappreciated for taking your filthy trash,
Unacknowledged for my back-breaking work,
I'm a non-entity to you bastards.

Is it because I wear work gloves,
Instead of a business suit?
Is it because I've never been to your clubs?

Well, I don't need your pity anyway;
This job is for my family's survival,
Not your contrived compassion.

Blue-collar dignity, my ass.

Travis

Matthew Owens

Customers complaining, children squealing;
God's punishment for a high school dropout.
My two-year old doesn't even know me;
His grandma's more a mom than I,
But I must endure this hell to pay for my Travis.

Receiptless ladies, lewd supervisors;
I wanted freedom, but work from 8 to 5;
I wanted freedom, but now have a child.
My directionless ways have led me here.

Lonely bedroom, anniversaries non-existent;
Both payments for an early commitment.
Our child is now only my child;
My life belongs to a department store.
But I wouldn't be here if it weren't for Travis.

Maire

Matthew Owens

War-torn Northern Ireland;
Another story of sadness.
Hate consumes life once again;
Old political hatred kills the innocent:

A freckled beauty is confused by life;
A Belfast bomb took her younger brother,
Not ready, not even to grade school,
His death darkened the light in her life.

Though the teary sadness has faded,
A confused sorrow still hangs around her eyes;
The question of "Why?" is clear in her stare.
Disillusionment is common to the young.

Eve

Kelly Fink

Peaceful, calm, and undisturbed,
Naked from the sins unknown.
Then the sinful serpent slithered up unnoticed.
Tightly wrapped around her untouched body,
She fought viciously to be free.
Free from the devil's spawn,
Free from the wickedness.
With the poisonous fangs, he struck her,
Sinking the venom deep into her pure soul.
A soul now poisoned with uncleanness,
That will never wash or fade.
A tattooed soul that must fight
Against the temptations of the wicked world,
Fight for the innocence that she lost,
Fight to be saved.

Grandmother

Jaleen Deardurff

Her legs, bent and slow, struggle with each step,
as she leans against her cane,
making her way across the room.

Watching her, I remember not so long ago
when I could barely keep up with her,
my three steps to her one long stride.

Turning her gray head, she looks at me,
smiling, and carefully lowers herself
into her favorite chair.

Returning her smile, I think back
to the time when I crawled into her lap,
begging her to read to me.

Sighing deeply, exhausted from the short trek,
she sets aside the cane, and
leans back to relax.

Fondly, I remember the energetic grandmother
who arranged Easter egg hunts and Christmas parties,
and who always bought me a birthday present.

Her face crinkles with each expression, lined
with eight decades of living, reflecting
too many worries, too many disappointments.

Behind the lines, I still see the one
who watched over me, making sure I wouldn't get hurt.
I depended on her.

Her old eyes, tinted with cataracts, close as she drifts
into slumber,
tired much too soon.

I watched her, relishing the moment,
remembering the past.
Now, she depends on me.

The Old Priest

Jaleen Deardurff

The old priest, wise and holy, offered
many words of wisdom.
He often talked about God, and
why it was important for us to know Him.

As a young man, he devoted
his life to the Lord, serving
Him with all his being, loving
Him with all his heart, sharing
God's love with everyone he encountered
throughout the years, teaching,
caring, loving the world around him.

The old priest, tired and weak,
never stopped learning,
never stopped teaching,
about the God he would soon join.

Even as cancer ravaged his body with pain,
robbing him of appetite and sleep, it
could not take away his love for God, and
keeping his eyes on Him who created him, he
looked forward to eternity in Heaven, knowing
it would be soon, raised his tired eyes and
surrendered his soul to God.

The old priest will be missed,
loved and remembered.
We will see him again,
standing near the God he taught us about.

(Dedicated to the memory of Father Rudolph Bierberg)



poems by

Mike Nichols

Overcast Drive

Mike Nichols

The Driver and John,
in the front seats and I feel like I'm not there.
The Driver is so far away, he's gone,
in front behind a familiar wall
and I see him wave
to every passerby,
everyone he's known in his life,
everyone on these small town streets.
Streets that have names
that won't be heard or seen
in the eyes and ears of songs,
plays, poems, and stories
unless, I was told, I try really hard,
but I always gave it my worst.
Nobody you've ever heard of has come from here,
and I don't think I'll be the first.

Overcast drive through the day.
The Driver, he grins to me,
a smile, a light in the darkness,
a diamond to coal,
an ember to cold.
Then a turnaround in a gravel driveway,
John gets out and I take his place
by the Driver who says nothing while I
don't wear my seatbelt because I
don't care if I go through the windshield
when the car slides off the road
from the rain that's coming down now
but is never enough to quench my thirst
in a town nobody you've ever heard of has come from
and I don't think I'll be the first.

Domini

Mike Nichols

Through the curtain of night,
Clothed in moonlight,
The sister of twilight
Comes to me,
Domini.

In her face, Radiance.
In her eyes, Innocence.
In her touch, Deliverance.
She touches me,
Domini.

With whispers softer than air,
With dark, flowering, shadowy hair,
With great strength and greater care,
She carries me,
Domini.

Above the monsters of my fears,
Beyond the reach of time and years,
Away from sorrow and useless tears,
She lifts me,
Domini.

Listening to the stars glimmer,
Seeing the leaves shiver,
We sense the twilight growing dimmer.
And She leaves me,
Domini.

Eventually

Mike Nichols

If a candle burns too long,
it will choke on its own wax.
Eventually.

If you blow against the wind,
you'll run out of breath.
Eventually.

Every leaf changes color,
becomes brittle, breaks, and falls.
Eventually.

Every problem has its solutions,
every solution has its problems,
all to itself
that it can't solve itself.
Everything that is in order
is just in a different category
of disarray.
Day after day after day:
candles burn out,
winds blow,
leaves fall,
some of us wake up
for the last time.
To come to an end
is what it means to exist.
Is what it means to be human.

Or are we the same
as the drops of water
that fall from the clouds,
freeze in the cold,
melt in the sun,
disappear in the air,
to return to the clouds?

Everyone one of us
will burn out, blow out, and fall.
Eventually.

And You, Tom Eliot (After reading a biography of T.S. Eliot)

John Groppe

And you, Tom Eliot, who have cast your spell
and made your mark on us who do not write as well,
you can't release us from your fear.
You prayed and supped your wine.
We read your books and poems
and drank our beer.
But now we know.
Your life's an open book,
and though your poems remain aloof—
impersonal, as you have said—
we know now of your troubled marriage bed,
your horror of menses and dread of colds and flu,
the madness, the healing baths, the solitude.
You thought your hell was cosmic,
but it was only you.
In editing or money counting, through routine
you gained a sense of order,
became a prophet of decorum,
but now we know.
Tradition, state, and church were never facts,
but desperate hopes
for one who felt and feared his body.
We, whose words do not unsettle
the order of "all the works of art"
preceding ours, have seen the poet
but have lost the poems and do not know where to start.

(end)



The Cellar

Rachel Barlage

When Catherine was a small child, her father carried a bright yellow light on a long extension cord down the ladder to the basement on the few occasions when tornadoes or extremely violent thunder storms had forced her family to take refuge there. The basement was really just a storm cellar, with cement walls and a cement slab floor. A hot water heater was located in a corner, but other than a few damp boxes, there was nothing else in the small room. The ceiling was low. Catherine remembered her parents pacing hunched over as they listened to weather reports on the small battery-operated radio. She remembered eyeing spider webs and trying not to breathe in the cold damp air as she curled up in her father's arms, listening to him sing "Stewball" or "Both Sides Now." His voice was deep, steady, and incredibly reassuring.

Catherine tugged on the heavy trap door on the bathroom floor that opened into the cellar, blowing hair from her watery eyes. She had never been in the cellar by herself. She grunted and cursed with her efforts to pull up the door. Finally it gave way, and she rested it against the wall. She didn't know why she wanted to go into the cellar. She just felt that her journey to visit her birthplace and clean out her father's estate would not be complete unless she walked down into the cellar and breathed in the dampness that had seemed so ominous to her as a child.

Catherine picked up the large red flashlight that she had brought from her father's workbench. As soon as she felt the cold air on her toes, which were naked in her worn leather sandals, she blinked with a fear that she had not known since she was a child. For a moment she considered climbing back up and leaving the house, but she continued down the ladder and into the darkness below.

The cellar was exactly as she remembered it, and she could almost hear a hollow echo of her father's singing behind the silence that filled the

room like the moist air she breathed in. As the cold dampness filled her lungs, her bare arms and legs broke into goose bumps. She sat down on a cement block and rested her head on her knees. Sitting in the darkness, Catherine suddenly wanted to see. Feeling the bumpy plastic beneath her groping fingers, she pushed a switch with her thumb and sent a weak beam of light streaming into the room.

Catherine sat on the cold cement, hugging herself and whimpering with an almost inhuman fear. The flashlight faded until it only emitted a faint yellow glow. Suddenly, she felt a fierce and unbearable desire to see her father again, to feel his arms around her and the warmth of his breath on her neck and the back of her ears. She was no longer afraid, but for the first time since his death, she felt completely alone. She curled into a ball on the cold hard floor and let her anguish and longing enfold her like the dead air in the cellar.

Then, above the uneven whisper of her breathing, Catherine heard footsteps above her head. She looked up and saw her father's bare feet on the ladder. As he climbed into the cellar, she saw that he held a young girl with blonde curls. The girl's eyes were closed, and she clung to his neck with clenched fingers. Catherine's father was wearing his nubby striped pajama bottoms and a white v-neck t-shirt. He was speaking in soft monosyllables. He pulled a cement block from the corner without putting his daughter down and sat on it, cradling her in his arms.

"Where's mama?"

"She's visiting Grandma and Grandpa this weekend, remember?"

"Daddy?"

"Hmmm?"

"Is the tornado gonna get her?"

"No, Catie. She's safe and sound."

"Just like us?"

"Just like us."

"Do you think she's scared?"

"There's nothing to be scared of, baby."

"Oh. Then why am I scared then?"

"I think it's because you're afraid I won't tell you about the Three Bears."

"Will you tell me about the bears?"

"Only if you hug me really tight."

"Like this?"

"Exactly like that. Now," he began, smoothing her hair from her damp forehead, "Once upon a time there were Three Bears who lived in a forest. There was a Papa Bear and Mama Bear and...oh shoot, who was the third bear?"

"Baaa-by Bear, Daddy."

"That's right! And Baby Bear. One morning, the Bears..."

As she listened to her father tell the story she had heard hundreds of times in her childhood, Catherine cried. She stood up and walked over to him.

"Dad? Daddy?"

"While they were gone, a beautiful little girl who was named Goldilocks—"

"Because of her hair?"

"Because of her beautiful golden curls."

"Dad? Dad, please talk to me." But he didn't see her. He continued to tell the story, looking directly into the wide eyes of the child he held in his arms. "Dad! Look at me! Dad, please! I'm scared too!" Catherine was becoming hysterical. She fell to her knees hugging herself. She stared at the cement slab floor. "I'm scared too. I just want to touch you again. Just one more time, Daddy. I miss you. I miss you."

When Catherine looked up, she met her father's eyes. He had stopped speaking and was looking directly at her. "Dad? Can you see me, Daddy?" He squinted at her, craning his neck as if to see through a fog. Then he closed his eyes for several seconds. "Dad? It's me, Dad. I'm right here." At the sound of her voice, his eyes opened, and he looked at her again. Still he said nothing, and he did not move. He turned his head to one side and slowly moved it back until he met her eyes. He blinked again, turning his head to the other side, and stared at the ladder and the weak light that fell onto the floor. His eyes filled with tears. "Daddy, you know me. You know me." Warm tears slipped down Catherine's cold cheeks.

Very slowly, he gripped the cement block he sat on, and he pushed himself up. He stood for several moments, shaking as if he were a newborn fawn. Then he took a cautious step forward. He did not take his eyes off Catherine's face. He reached his right hand into the air, groping uselessly for something to hold onto, then let his arm fall to his side. Then he took one more step, followed by another, until he was standing in front of his daughter. He bent his knees unsteadily and lowered himself so that he was balancing on the front of his feet.

He reached his arm out as if to touch her, then pulled it back sharply. Then his fingers stretched toward her and touched her arm, at first curious and unsure. He probed her flesh as if to be sure that she were real. Then he stroked her arm in a touch of comfort and adoration. Catherine fell into his body, crying. He wrapped his arms unsteadily around her back, and, after a few moments, began to rock her back and forth gently.

"Shhh. Shhh." Catherine could feel his heartbeat beneath her cheek. She could hear his rhythmic breathing. He kissed the top of her head.

"I'm scared, Daddy. I'll never see you again." The rocking hesitated, and then began again. She felt his arms tighten around her. "I can't live

without you." Still rocking her back and forth, back and forth, he took her hand in his own and squeezed it tightly. "I'll always need you, Daddy. Please don't leave me." He took her shoulders in his hands and pulled her away from his body. He wiped the tears from her face with the bottom of his t-shirt. He kissed her cheek. He smiled.

"Just hold me for a little while longer," Catherine pleaded. "Just a few more minutes." She rested against his chest and closed her eyes. When she opened them, she felt a cool breeze on her cheeks. He was gone. ○



poems by

Alan Brinker

As I Watch A Dying Day

Alan Brinker

Brilliant, searing fire
Visible through skeletal trees
Lights the dying day.
Billowing grays and blacks
Collide with startling hues
Of red and orange
Meshing together as if one.
Blackness envelopes the flames,
Dousing them, ushering in
A new night.
Coolness.
Lone moon smiles on the dead land with tranquility,
A stark contrast to
The violent dying protests
Of another day.

Snowfall

Alan Brinker

Oh! To be like falling snow,
Peaceful, unique flakes heading
Towards a soft spot below,
Falling from heaven. Spreading
Into a warm, white pillow.

Sent from the heights of God,
It comes, reminding us of
Pristine beauty. A sly nod
From the one who rules above
As those graces we applaud.

Tripping

Alan Brinker

Want to dance?
Come take a trip with me.
Don't be shy, let's go
Walk through the door,
We'll take a moon-lit stroll.
Twisting, twirling, dipping, spinning,
I'll carry you in my arms
However you want to go
Just follow the flow,
forget what you've heard.
forget what you've learned;
Tonight nothing counts,
Everything is new.
it's like nothing you've seen,
Nothing you've done.
Want to talk to God?
I'll take you to Him
Want to be something (one) else?
No problem.
Just grab my hand and
I'll take you there.
A night of heaven is all yours.
Just take the trip with me.

Words

Alan Brinker

Sweet silent roses sway peacefully in
The garden of my head. I reach out to
Pick one, and I am pricked by a probing thorn.
A crimson point swells against ivory
skin, dripping onto the paper, forming
Words.

SPEECHLESS

Alan Brinker

BEAUTIFUL WORDS

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THEMSELVES
FROM MY PEN,
BUT NOT FROM
MY HELPLESS,
HOPELESS,
SWOLLEN TONGUE.

Coketown

Bill White

Somewhere children fear a fire-tipped moon
Spreading on a cold, cloudy bank.
But not in Coketown.
Small minds are too sullen and sad
To create phantasms of the night.

Somewhere clerks delight in coins
Stacked on groaning tables.
But not in Coketown.
Acid robs eyes and twists smiles,
Distorting flesh and freezing thought.

Somewhere hands sing, drink and play
Even when they work.
But not in Coketown.
Controlled and fearful, glancing briefly
To each side, seeing slits staring back.

Somewhere women and men try to fly together
Down twisting paths.
But not in Coketown,
Where routes of mind and brick
Lead only to caverned furnaces.

Under the Apple Tree, September 5th, 5:00 pm

Angie Gibbs

The sweet smell of rotten apples fills the air.
The warm summer breeze blows swiftly through the limbs.
The first leaves are slowly drifting towards the ground.
The cornfield, empty from the recent harvest,
Stretches out in front of me.
I watch as a few deer slowly graze their way
From one end to the other.
The dogs are charging down the driveway
After a car that is out of place here.
The horses and llamas munch lazily in the pasture on my left.
The ducks are content to float their day away on the creek.
Behind me I can hear the shouting voices of the kids,
Intelligently escaping the heat in the pool.
Beside me on the old quilt, my mom quietly places the burdens of
her life on my shoulders.

I
Get
Blown
A w a y
Angie Gibbs

The wind
Drifts slowly
Across the lake.
I drift casually
Along with it, making
My dreams come true. The
Sun reflects golden rays off of
The rippling blue water. Gazing into
The sun I reflect my dreams that are now
Coming true.
This is all possible because I am here with you. Here
Watching the day drift by in the breeze. I know
That you are here beside me and I am blown
A w a y



poems by

Jeremy White

To Live is to Die

Jeremy White

To live is to die...
An utterance of truth bestowed upon us all.
Our only guarantee, our ticket from the go.
Is it to fear? To throw fright upon? To try and run in vain?
Is it to look forward to? To glorify? To ponder at all?
It's what's given us; why smite? You were born for it,
A conquering by nature, not now to be defeated.
To live means to die.

The Fly

Jeremy White

The fly,
the insect so incessantly buzzing about my nose,
that I curse in my sleep,
which has nothing better to do than compose
figure eights in the air above my bed,
and causes me to,
so violently in my dreams,
envision myself with a fly swatter
laughing hysterically as I take a swing at it,
swiping out its measly existence.

Contemplating Suicide

Jeremy White

The thrill is not
the agonizing, knotting sensation
you feel in your stomach when the car hits
120 miles per hour. And it does not come from the breakneck, jarring
motion that pounds your head
up against the ceiling and causes you to, in vain, attempt
to hold yourself still. Nor does it come from the angry music
that pierces your ears until you must howl with the stereo to relieve
yourself of the pain. No, it does not come from any of that, like it or not.

Rather, the thrill comes from knowing this night could be your last. At any
moment you could run off the road and wrap that defenseless vehicle around
a tree. Or, perhaps even worse, run off a bridge or over a cliff. At
any rate, the pulsing of the heart and the tingling of the nerves is all
directly connected with fear; with your own terrible thought of
death. It is related to the fact that you know the consequences
if you do not succeed are equal to the ones left upon your
family and friends if you do. A bullet through the roof
of your mouth is more reliable. Leaping from a cliff
is more traditional. But achieving the state of the
unknown through a velocity that comes to a sudden
stop is much more triumphant, glorious, and
heroic. We all must die some way. Why
not choose our own fate rather than to
succumb to disease or heart- attacks?
Why not die on the road where you
have lived your storied life?
Why not? Right before your
head hits the windshield
is too late to question
yourself now, don't
you think? What
is going on in
your mind at
this moment?
Too late.

Harboring Dreams

Jeremy White

Standing outside of the House of Seven Gables that day,
in the seaside garden, I was as happy
as I ever remember being.

The sun was shining golden
on a beautiful summer day.
A slight sea breeze
subtly blowing its incensed air
off Salem Harbor
where the infinite blueness housed countless sailboats.

A garden overwhelmed with numerous breeds of beautiful,
healthy flowers, a myriad of colors, vivacity of life,
a sight and smell sweeter than poetry.

You.
You were the most beautiful flower of all;
golden hair glimmering in the sun.

And I, on the stomping grounds of a hero, a master,
in awe of where I was, losing myself in time—
150 years ago, imagining what it was like,
the life he had, the beauty of where he was raised.

And the view of the harbor from the house, immaculate;
a picture unpaintable, a poem unattainable.
My love for you swelling my chest,
my love for him and his home
forcing me to marvel at where I stood.

A kiss in the garden, not to forget
sensations which words are unworthy of.
Take me back.

Sadness

Rachel Barlage

Who can put a label on
that tiny hole that grows
until emptiness consumes your insides,
until your body is a shell
protecting nothing;
that nearly imperceptible quiver
in your always-steady voice
that echoes inside like
a closing door in a vacant hallway,
that quiet whisper in your mind
that distracts you as you pretend
to be contented,
that crushing weight
that makes you wish you were anyone,
anything but you.

Cicada

Heather Moser

"Stop the car!" he suddenly demanded. "Pull over at the top of the hill."

I looked over, startled. He seemed concerned, but I saw no cause for alarm. I pulled to the side of the road. He opened the passenger door and got out. Then he hunched over the outside mirror and tried to pick up a cicada that was clinging to it. His big rough hands were clumsy as he gently tried to pry the trembling, shimmering insect from its perch. He was eventually successful, and he held the cicada up in the sunlight for a moment before informing me we couldn't possibly expect a tiny creature to hold on to the mirror for our half-hour drive. Then he lay down in the road.

"What the hell are you doing?" I asked. "There could be cars coming! Get up!"

He blissfully ignored me as he situated himself on the burning asphalt and gently brushed the still-quivering cicada from his index finger.

As the bug started to make its laborious journey to the other side of the road, he held his head to the ground to watch its progress.

"Had to check that I didn't hurt his legs.

Don't hit him when you pull back on the road," he instructed as he folded his long legs in order to get back into the car.

What a fool, lying down in the road.

What a nuisance, stopping the car for a bug.

(How I could help but love him?)



Cookies

Heather Moser

In the good old days when I was less than four feet tall, my favorite book in the entire universe was Cookie Monster and the Cookie Tree. For those of you who are unaware of this fine masterpiece of literature, the main character (Cookie Monster) locates a botanical wonder: a tree that blossoms cookies. Because my grandparents lived in a house with a few acres of woods, I was almost certain that all I had to do was arrive in Pennsylvania during the cookie season in order to harvest a few dozen cookies.

I happened to mention my theory to my mother, and apparently she hatched a plan and relayed it to my grandparents. The day after we arrived at their house, my grandmother casually suggested that I take a walk in the woods with her before breakfast. (I must be terminally gullible because I suspected nothing despite this strange request.) You can only imagine my ecstatic reaction when I stumbled upon a tree that ACTUALLY GREW COOKIES!! They were the kind with a hole in the center like a doughnut, and they had chocolate frosting stripes. A string had been tied (I mean had grown) through the hole in the center and suspended the cookies from the pine branches. You can bet that I ruined my breakfast that morning by “harvesting” too many cookies! I believe that I told my mother that since only fruit grew on trees, I was actually eating the equivalent of apples.

After that year, the Cookie Tree bloomed every summer for a few days (coincidentally the days I happened to be visiting). Unfortunately, when I asked my parents to buy a cookie tree for our house, they said that they don’t grow well in Indiana soil. I was forced to believe them after I experimented by burying a cookie in the back yard: alas, no trees grew from it. (What a waste of a perfectly good cookie!) ○

A Wall Built to Fall

Amy Ceadar (Class of 1988)

She builds wall over wall,
Constantly adding a layer of brick
to a layer of mortar.
Box inside box inside box.

She is tired of climbing up,
Building the walls higher.
Making more walls,
making existing walls
higher and thicker.
Box inside box inside box.

She complains of the cold and the dark.
It has been so many walls
since the sun has come in.
The walls are crumbling at the foundation.
It could all collapse at any moment.
Still she builds.
Box inside box inside box.

She is lonely.
If only she had put
a gate in,
but then someone could get in or out.

Still she goes on building.

Box inside box inside box

The Rum Runner

Amy Ceadar '(Class of 1988)

He'd sneak a few swigs here and there,
In his white dress shirt
with the collar.
His mustache trimmed and waxed.
He would finish and collapse on the davenport.

He was a dapper man,
Always in fashion.
Gold watch at home
in his side pocket.

His housekeeper bought his
"rheumatism medicine" for him.
She'd go from store to store,
town to town.
He couldn't go—
it wouldn't be proper or fitting.

What would the Mister say?
Surely he must know.

She could hear what they were thinking.
It was written in their eyes.

She wondered if his customers
would keep their money in that bank
if they ever saw the Mister as she did?



poems by

Bob Dusek

Twisting

Bob Dusek

I shake my head
and gather my thoughts

I bury my hands deep into my pockets and close my eyes

As I wind aimlessly
through my thoughts again,
I turn over all the fallen leaves in my path.

Will they be there tomorrow
or will they blow away again?
But, do I want them to stay?

Isn't everyone another avenue of sorrow
for inevitable shortcomings?
Or, are they all pieces of the puzzle?

I guess I'll have to go on to find out.

Walking with my head down,
I kick up the leaves in all directions
looking for more clues.

I always seem to forget:
these trails won't last forever.
Time will tell my tale
leaving me behind without an answer.

I shake my head
and my thoughts break loose,
they scatter away 'til next time,
but they won't be the same,
they're gone, twisting away again.

Stick Around

Bob Dusek

As I walk from one edge of my moon to the other
I feel a certain presence inside of me.

The whipping winds and blinding light
break my thought into a billion pieces,

Most of them seeking this presence,
the mysterious warmth I feel sometimes.

It hides when I want to play.

I like it better that way.
No worries, no inhibitions—
only my free mind and spirit to carry my feet where they
belong.

If I could only make it hide for good,
happiness would overcome me.
I would overheat with joy,
burnt out.

Maybe I'd like to stay for a while... just a little while,

Wading around in it,
I could do anything and go anywhere.

My price, they'd pay for these waters.
Up ahead, they'd win with these waters.

No storms or tides, just an omniscient view
of things that came and went,
of things that have yet to be,

Created only within,
yes, I love these waters.

Coming Apart

Bob Dusek

I don't know
what to think about it all,

The weather and the people walking by,

Pulling me apart again.
I can't believe...

That I couldn't find my place.
I was thinking of her face
keeping me apart again...

walk away to keep yourself around.
Step aside and look within
Then come back to earth again.

Feeling good...
Why did I let it tear me down?
Of course it hasn't gone away.
Keep your guard up but let it stay.

Yesterday was a Long Tomorrow...

Bob Dusek

I found two pills in a dollar bill yesterday.
They told me to think twice before shaking.
So I shook long and hard, thought vigorously—
so to speak.

I normally use my tongue when things get going like they do.
Today isn't yesterday though, and what I wanted then,
I forget about from time to time—
until I remember the name again.

So I take a taste and check what's real.
It takes me by surprise and I take time to kill the thoughts of
yesterday
— when I was gone.

Feeling them tomorrow would be a fatal second dose.
Only keep the new ones, they'll help the most.

Walk backwards to avoid the whirling wind.
That wind will break your back you know.

It can tear out your spine and make you snivel,
walking behind the crowd, you snivel,
Pushing up your glasses with your hands buried in your pockets,
careful to avoid the holes—you snivel.

Lying on the ground in a puddle of you and your old self,
you snivel, hoping like hell that yesterday's good deeds will
take you to heaven.

Those good deeds and goodies saved up will take you to tomorrow. But what then? Do you rely some more on those bastards—hopes and dreams.

I give up for now...
I'll just lie here thinking about what's now and breathing in
others' thoughts, dreams, and bits of wisdom —sniveling.



Only Him...Only Me

Melissa Westphal

As I walk along the side of the old country road on the way back to my home, he follows close behind like a shadow. We say nothing, but I know he is feeling so much... as I am. There are moments in life that we want to freeze because we know things cannot be that way forever. This is one of those moments. He surrounds my body and grabs my waist. He pulls me close and I lay my head against his warm and sweet smelling chest. We stop our embrace and walk on. I can see my home at the top of the hill as I have so many times before, but this time I do not feel good about it. This time seeing home feels bad because it signifies the end... the end of my time with him and the end of my soaring freedom.

He turns to me and asks me, "Do you want to hear a secret?" I nod and his warm breath whispers in my ear, "I love you" and one tear rolls down my cheeks without my permission. I never thought the day would come that someone would say that to me. But, I still cannot allow myself to say "I love you too."

We walk up to my door and I say good-bye. He says, "... not for long" and looks at me as if he is searching for more. I walk into my house and shut the door. Dad sits on the couch doing a crossword puzzle. Mom talks on the phone with Aunt Liz. I walk up the stairs and into my room.

I think about my lost moment. I should have said, "I love you too." I dial his number. He should be home by now, but he's not. The urgency rushes through my body. I run down the stairs, out the door, and down the road toward his home. I run for all the lost moments of the past. I run for the moments I could have made extraordinary, but didn't. Fear no longer holds me back and I run....

As I run over the bridge, something forces me to stop. He is on the rocks

below looking down at the water. I rush down to him. He senses my presence and looks up with a smile. I rush to him and the tears come again without my permission. Before the words come, it begins to rain... first slowly and then violently. I say, "I... I love you." He says, "Forever." The rain pours on my face without abandon as he pulls me to his body. We kiss and for the first time I feel at peace with the world and truly become a part of it. The rain comes, but I no longer can feel it... only him... only me. ○



poems by

Randy Wagers

PARALYSIS DIMENSIONIOSIS (frozen soul)

Randy Wagers

A PARALYZED DIMENSION...
I AM FROZEN.
SOMETHING SYMBOLIC:
IT GRIPS MY BREATH.
MY MIND IS A SANCTUM,
A SEANCE FOR THE DAMNED.

SOMETHING SYMBOLIC:
IT'S RIPPING ME APART,
ACTUAL FEELINGS THAT WILL NEVER RETURN.
I COULD NEVER TRUST AGAIN.
I AM NUMB.

A BROKEN SOUL
TRIES TO SUSTAIN
THE WALLS OF REALITY
JUST FOR THE ABSENCE
OF SHATTERED GLASS.

A PARALYZED DIMENSION
I AM FROZEN.
A PARALYZED DIMENSION
I AM SHATTERED.

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

Randy Wagers

URBAN UNREST,
POLICE BRUTALITY.
WHEN WILL IT END?
TO SERVE AND PROTECT
IS TO LIE AND BEFRIEND?
PRESSURE—RIOTS—ANGER—VIOLENCE
FRUSTRATION TOGETHER—HATE FOREVER!
BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY.

THEY FOUND A WAY TO SYSTEMATICALLY DISCRIMINATE,
FIRE UP THE TERROR, STIR UP THE HATE!
THIS WORLD WILL NEVER LEARN TO TRUST.
THE GOVERNMENT STOLE THE INDIAN'S LAND
... FOR THEIR OWN LUST.

PRESSURE—RIOTS—ANGER—VIOLENCE
FRUSTRATION TOGETHER—WE HATE FOREVER!
BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY
STOP

BRING ME BACK (VISIONS IN BLACK)

Randy Wagers

SOMETIMES I WONDER
WHAT PEOPLE THINK
AND THEN I WONDER
DO THEY EVEN CARE?

DO PEOPLE EVEN KNOW THAT
I STARE AT THE SKY
AND SEE APOCALYPSE LOOK
ME STRAIGHT IN THE EYE?

OH VISIONS IN BLACK
PLEASE BRING ME BACK.

Evening Solitude

Rachel Barlage

Standing alone
in the pale moonglow,
I reach my arms to the sky,
to the stars that glow dimly,
faded in the brilliance
of the full moon.

I look through the branches
of leafless trees to
the steep pasture,
painted golden by the moon's
borrowed light. Alone, I hear
the lonely moan of a solitary cow
echo over the mountain.

Longing

Rachel Barlage

I touch you, try to crawl inside your mind
as you have invaded mine.

Each of my thoughts is a shadow of you;
when I close my eyes, your face is my light.

But I can find no way to enter you.

Your body is your barrier;
it keeps you safe inside yourself.

But I long to break through,
to be safe in you.

I long to see through your eyes,
to get drunk on your emotions,
your desires.

I want to wrap you around me,
pull you over me like a new skin,
feel you inside me.

I want you to penetrate my loneliness.



poems by

Tepnesh Tennvic Segil

Help

Tepnesh Tennvic Segil

Help me,
Listen to my cry for aid.
Why do I face these
Constant changes
Every day?
Help me,
My cross is too heavy
The burden, too much
I can't go on by myself
Help me,
I need some friends
Why is it that I think
That you are against me?
Help me,
You're giving me
Too much to overcome alone
I need some help
Everywhere I turn is
Tragedy and despair
Is there no hope?
I do not see you
Helping ME!
Show me that you care
Help me.

Here she comes
There she goes
How is it that
She can go on
I am a fool
Help her,
Her burden is greater
Than any others I've seen
How does she go on by herself?
Help her,
She is my friend
She is met with challenges
Every day
Help her,
She is overcoming
Every obstacle you
Give her, she deserves some help
Every time I turn
She is there for me
She gives me hope
She seeks me out
Help ME?
No more, I pray instead...
Help HER.

She Is A Fire

Tepnesh Tennvic Segil

In the darkness of night
I'm alone and trying to fight
This emptiness with all my might
When silence taunts and shadows bite
Suddenly I know everything's all right
For she is here and she is bright — she is a fire..

I'm filled with joy from her glances
Though they pierce my soul like lances
Every moment with her enhances
My feelings for her, yet I take no chances
with her, I sit and watch as she dances — she is a fire

Her warmth seems to help me learn
To stand up and speak when it's my turn
Though I remain to stay stiff and stern
I dare not touch, for she can burn — she is a fire

I wish sparks would fly, then torches would blaze
But this thought is one of the foolish ways
That I try to imagine better days — she is a fire

Look, but don't touch
It would hurt too much.

She is a fire.

Poinsettias On A Grave

Tepnesh Tennvic Segil

No one remembers me, nor does anybody care.
They all walk past it, without knowing who lies there.
No one visits me, I am a forgotten soul.
No one talks to me, no one takes time to console.

There's nothing odd about flowers on a grave,
But there's one thing that makes me cry...
You see, the flowers on my grave are poinsettias,
And it's a hot day in late July.

When I walked the earth, everyone knew who I was.
They'd send me flowers, a note that read, "Just because."
Oh sure I was loved, I was everybody's friend.
They'd all visit me, until I was at an end.

There's nothing odd about flowers on a grave,
But there's one thing that makes me cry...
You see, the flowers on my grave are poinsettias,
And it's a hot day in late July.

The cross is cracked and broken. Some kids knocked it
down.
All my ornamentation lies down on the ground.
The cleaning crew does their job. They remove all trash,
And take down all the flowers, while they mow the grass.

There's nothing odd about flowers on a grave,
But there's one thing that makes me cry...
You see, the flowers on my grave are poinsettias,
And it's a hot day in late July.